

Changes in Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province of Vietnam

In a mid-December day of 2015, we were projected for the last field trip with the aim to observe the changes and impacts created by project activities. After days of preparation and retaining eagerness, two of us – one Communication and Marketing Officer and one Programs M&E Officer – were stably settled in a night bus departing Hanoi. The valuable rest occupied most of eight hours travelling; while some remaining time was spent on the deep thoughts about the destination in North East mountainous region and the project ADRA is currently implementing.

The bus ran fast during night, and the early morning of next day quickly informed that the journey ended. Not yet stopped there, we hopped on a smaller van heading to Bao Lac town, belonging one of two most remote and poorest districts in Cao Bang province. The characteristics of the area themselves pose challenges and issues for the individual and community development.

Bao Lac falls into the list of 62 poorest districts nationwide and holding 71% of poverty rate among population (2011, Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs).

Another five hours gradually passed and by noon both of us were present at the ADRA's workstation in Cao Bang. Bao Lac is location of the past LICEEM and current SLDP project executed by ADRA in Vietnam, which successfully launched an effective mechanism for wide grassroots participation – the establishment of Community Development Club in each village (regarded the smallest administrative unit). Not all the areas were touched, and therefore the proposed Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project (CEDLIP), funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the ADRA Finland Foundation, was set up in new 15 villages of Thuong Ha and Bao Toan communes.

Na Dan village

Na Dan came up as the first destination I visited in that afternoon. Being accompanied by one of ADRA project field coordinators, I arrived Na Dan school, where organized the monthly meeting of the established Community Development Club (CDC). This was explained the opportunities for us – officers based in the organizational headquarter – to meet up with the greatest number of community members and witness on own eyes their involvement in the project.

After a while of waiting for the villagers to gather fully, a San Chi ethnic minority woman caught my gaze while she was collecting firewood on one steep slope of the hill. Later she walked towards us and we had the chance for greeting and a talk.

Her name is Tan Thi Muong, a resident of Na Dan village. She is at the age of 29, living in a family with husband and three kids. "My oldest daughter is 11 years old, following by an 8-year-old daughter and the youngest son just reaches 6 years. The younger both study at this primary



Photo 1: Muong collects firewood to contribute to her children's school kitchen, since school organizes shared lunches for all students starting from last few weeks. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

school and we luckily don't have to pay any tuition fee due to the distinctive features of mountainous zone and ethnic minority group. Here we live really hard life, but I will try my best to bring all the children to school, so that they gain education and have better future", shared Muong.

Speaking about the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project of ADRA implemented in Na Dan, Muong said: "women here are encouraged to participate in the project and become the direct beneficiaries. Looking around and you will see lots of women attending the

community development club like I do. We decide to join because we own rare chance to study at school but we can reach the horizon of knowledge through this project's activities. For instance in previous months we learned new agricultural techniques like making fermented bio-fertilizers; we shared about successful experience of animal husbandry; we discussed about the impacts of keeping animal sheds under the stilt houses – the living place of humans, and the need of using clean and safe water to improve our health. I find the people of my village in general and I myself understand better the most urgent issues we are facing and we desire to find the solutions for them."

When project called for initiative ideas that benefit the whole community, the people of Na Dan village approved to solve first and foremost the environmental problem; as a result they submitted proposal for removing animal sheds out of the human living space. Muong shared that "after the meeting and the final decision of initiative, the female participants were in effort of convincing their families to make the change. Thanks to knowledge we obtained from the project, almost all of people could explain to their relatives and drive the successful persuasion."

Just finishing a short sharing, Muong excused us to move quickly into the classroom for the club meeting. While the club leader of Na Dan introduced the day topic of the Registration Form for Livelihood Improvement at household level, consisting of 25 actions ranging in different sectors: economic, social, environmental and community development, we noticed that Muong was



Photo 2: Tan Thi Muong. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

one of participants paying much attention to the content. She sometimes helped explain to the other ladies about the given information. At the end, Muong was happy to register for her family the action number 3, 4 and 18, which are respectively about good farming practice for animal husbandry and using clean water for cooking, drinking and washing.



Photo 3: Muong is discussing with people about the content introduced in the monthly meeting of Na Dan Community Development Club, set up by CEDLIP. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Na Dan village

Walking me to the next families in village was Tan Van Van, acting Secretary in Na Dan Community Development Club. From the first impression, this man appeared younger than the age told (29 years old), he also showed up skillful during the club meeting in making the minute and explaining project activities to the local people.

Van asked me to visit his family on the way going down the valley to meet up other project beneficiaries. I agreed and we came to see the happy families full of children.

“They are the children of my brother living next door, and also the children from the neighbors’ houses. Here we share the community spirit and everyone can be the family members”, he shyly smiled.

Van told me about his family's involvement in CEDLIP, "I think we had never been in any project before. When ADRA commenced its project here, I was convinced to work closer with the project staff, so became the club's secretary. The work is to mobilize people participating in the project activities, and to attend the training provided by ADRA. Sometimes during the harvest season, it is a bit busy for me personally and for the community in general to carry on the work, but am happy to do something good for this village and I will try my best during the project time."



Photo 4: The family of Tan Van Van with his mother, the sister in law and the nieces. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Through the study about living conditions, I got to know that they possess agricultural land to cultivate paddy rice, producing most of the years sufficient food for the family's demand. Besides, four adults (including Van and his wife, his parents) raise the cattle and poultry to earn extra money. Van said it depends on the capital and the time that they choose which specific animals to raise and breed. At the moment, they are keeping 4 cows, 6 pigs and 8 goats under attentive caring.



Photo 5: Van's mother proudly stands in front of the new shed for the cows. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Mentioning about the cow, he excitedly shared: "my family registered for the project initiative of animal shed removal. It has been a month up to now. The cows were moved to the new place, our ground floor became clean, having less insects (mosquitos and flies) and bad odor. The family received ADRA grant of 1 million in form of construction materials, we tried to match the rest's worth of 10 million for building a 15m² cowshed, with capacity of 4 animals. During the construction, all of the family members participated in finding, transporting and processing the

wood, everyone was delighted. We thought of doing this before, but became more determined after learning about added benefits introduced by the project staff. We plan for next month to make the new pig house, so as to reduce the risks of diseases for both humans and the livestock.”

“Cattle shed removal was the first community development initiative of Na Dan village. The second is about to install the safe container for clean water. After discussing with whole family about the old cement tank, which is located in low land area and gets degraded by time, I continued registering with the community to make the improvement. When the initiative is implemented village-wide, I will buy a stainless steel water tank to store water for cooking, drinking, bathing and washing the animals and the sheds. I look forward to bringing about this change”, Van made the last sharing before we left.



Photo 6: The old cement water tank exists in Van’s house, with part of the cover is broken. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Na Dan village



Photo 7: Mrs. Tan Thi Giot. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

San Chi is one of ethnic minority groups in Cao Bang, residing mainly in Bao Lam and Bao Lac district. In the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project's site, there are clusters of San Chi communities engaging in the project.

Mrs. Tan Thi Giot (40 years old) is a member of San Chi community living in Na Dan village, Thuong Ha commune (Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province). She has two sons; both grow up to the maturity age. The eldest settles down in another district along with his family; the younger follows a boarding school's curriculum based in the town. Giot is happy for the background of her children, as for her they have more chances to approach the new things.

In terms of economic conditions, her family is classified as above national poverty line. Giot told: "I and my husband focus on growing a forest and earn the income from the high-value industrial trees. We marry for 20 years and that duration is also the time of our forest. After the first 10 years, our forest land yields produce's worth of 12-13 million dong per year. We are luckily not in the hunger."



Photo 8: The pig herd of Tan Thi Giot. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Giot's family participates in CEDLIP via activities to establish the Community Development Club and empower its operation, develop and implement community initiatives and the community development fund. "Last August during the call for proposals, I and my husband submitted one scheme to develop our herd of pigs. This is the black pig breed, which normally takes a year for the natural growth before we can sell them. With the loan from

project, we purchase more nutritious food to feed them so they can be ready after 7-8 months. Apart from that, ADRA also organizes

training on animal husbandry to help prevent animals from diseases. I myself find it really valuable", Giot said.

To improve the environment and living conditions, CEDLIP helped Giot and the people in her village to kick start the initiative of building new sheds for the livestock. Priority was put first and foremost on the big cattle, owing to security reason and general economic situation. Three basic requirements were set up: new shed is located minimum 10 meters of distance from the human living place, having fences and lock, having ditch to contain the animal waste.

Giot has 6 cows in her shed, raised in free-ranging method. With the volume of waste they create, her house is often immersed in excrement and mud in the rainy days. With the encouragement from the project, this time Giot invests in the new shed with the drainage ditches. "With this new shed, we not only keep our house cleaner and fresher, but also can utilize the animal waste for making fermented bio-fertilizers. Thanks to the project for providing all those knowledge and assistance, so we can live with the change of a better life", Giot told us while showing the new cow shed. In few days when they completed the shed, the cows would enjoy the new home.



Photo 9: Giot shows the new shed that her family is trying to complete before the next chill. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.



Photo 10: Her cow herd is coming home in the late afternoon. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Na Vieng village

Confident to stand in front of the crowd and raise own voice

“I was elected to become the vice-president of the Women’s Union in the village, but I refused the position for not owning much interest. Moreover in my thought, lacking experience of conducting the social activities would add up the hesitance while I talk to people and try to mobilize them. Over eight months ago, since the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project (CEDLIP) came to operate the activities in this village, I was convinced by the competences of the project officers and the project goal, and I started growing my attentiveness to the community development work. Once the Community Development Club (CDC) was set up in my place – Na Vieng village, Thuong Ha commune (Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province, Vietnam), I agreed on holding the work”. The opportunity, that later brings change to Ly Thi Dao’s life (23 years old, Nung ethnic minority) is special. Following the school curriculum up to the eleventh grade, Dao does master not only the Vietnamese languages but also few other tribal languages including Tay, San Chi and Dao. That leads to part of the reason she was still trusted for the position of secretary in the CDC.



Photo 11: Dao reviews the activity documents with ADRA project officer before the meeting starts. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

“I have been taking the job since August 2015. The extra work creates more hectic life, but the project also allows me to travel and interact more, that’s what I can learn a lot from. I don’t want to stay at home and remain narrow-minded”, Dao happily shared about her work. “The difficulties still exist. Sometimes when I talked to the elderly, who still followed backward customs in order to make changes to life ahead, eventually they still

listened to me but somehow retained the anger”, she continued.

Dao’s family also sets out a sample for working hard to get rid of the poverty cycle. Five people of the household, including Dao and her husband, the four-year-old boy and Dao’s mother in law, own a decent piece of arable land for subsistence food production plus an amount of surplus for trading in some prosperous years. Since three years ago, Dao already decided on reforestation by herself. “There’s no forest land given to my family by the government, so I worked on the public plot. Up to know I have planted 7,000 trees. Expected in the ten years ahead will come the proper harvest time, so every year from now, I just spend a bit of time for caring the trees and that’s why I would like to do something more to benefit the community.”

Undergoing training and practice in CEDLIP activities, Dao is becoming more and more confident with the skills acquired. “When the project finishes, I want to work like a local officer. During the recent meetings, the Vice-president of People’s Committee saw that I was able to confidently present to the people, he motivated me to participate in the training course on capacity building for local authorities; and then there’s the opportunity for me to work in this area. Thanks to ADRA project that my expectation is coming true”, Dao said.

Sharing about the changes in community brought by CEDLIP, Dao told: “The project triggered positive changes. There are households stepping well on awareness and behavior change journey, for example using hygiene toilet and safe water, creating the landfill instead of dumping trash everywhere in the environment. About the first community initiative, few families owning least land have not yet registered for the removal of animal sheds, the rest actively support the initiative. Hope that positive results will inspire the other households to bring actions on later.”



Photo 12: Dao explains to the people in her village about the 25 actions of improvement to be done at household level. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Na Vieng village

Nong Van Duc is a 48-year-old farmer of Na Vieng village, Thuong Ha commune (Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province). His family is granted status “medium”, partially on the grounds that 5 members all belong to the labor age. He develops the pig raising model, and takes that as the main cash source.

There is a fact that the price of agricultural commodities in poor regions remains unstable, on account of informal market and the farmers lack resources to access market information. Duc also claimed on that to explain the unstable and insignificant cash source of the family.

“I nevertheless still dream a pig farm. I will be able to achieve better price. That will take more time and investment. For the moment, I try to take best care of every herd and earn the best profit possible”, Duc shared.



Photo 13: Duc is caring his pigs. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Three months ago submitting for the loan of CEDLIP to buy more breeding pigs, Duc now own 4 pigs.

Duc told: “This project is very interesting. I don’t miss any meeting of the community club. Since the day borrowing loan, we expect a good profit from this pig group, then we will reinvest into another models, depending on the market demand. Furthermore today I just heard about the 25 actions to improve the household

livelihood from the meeting, I already registered the action of animal waste management. In the due time, I will often clean the pig shed and collect the manure to make fermented bio-fertilizers, enriching the agricultural land of the family. Last training course, the project also supported the understanding and practice of the technique and finance for the fermentation process.”

Na Dua village

Na Dua is a border village adjacent to the country China of Thuong Ha commune (Bao Lac district, Cao Bang Province). Thanks to the advantage condition of distance, there are a number of households in the village having promoted the trading activities across the territory, so gained an extra source of income to improve the living conditions. This however still happens at small scale and fragmented level, as a result the families continue farming for their subsistence food.

In the afternoon arriving at the village, I met Luong Thi Ninh, whose house is close to the main road and owning an impressively greeny vegetable garden. At first she was a bit hesitating to start the talk with the strangers. Later knowing that we are people from ADRA and working for the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project (CEDLIP), she got more open and welcomed us to the house.



Photo 14: Luong Thi Ninh stands in her vegetable garden. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Nhinh said her husband was the one who directly involved in the CEDLIP, but he also kept her updated of what was introduced and practiced during the meeting and the training he participated in. She therefore learned that there was a micro-finance program initiated by the project of ADRA. It was about accessing to the loan of 3 million dong maximum amount (around 150USD), with very low interest rate (0.5-0.6%/month) and a year of due date for payment.

“At that moment I understood that it was a small loan only, but I also recognized that it would be useful to develop a poultry model and hence help us earn more money for savings. I have two children, both of them are following the educational study at high level now, I have to support them and I want them to have better future. I and my husband would be very much needing these savings for their study period”, said Ninh.



Photo 15: The herd of ducks of Ninh’s family is free ranged. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Nhinh continued: “that’s how we came to the decision of proposal for duck raising model, submitted to the community development club set up by the project. After receiving the loan, we bought 25 ducks and additional food to feed them nutritiously. After 2 months, the profit from selling the pack was 1.5 million dong. We kept reinvesting in the next herd of 30 ducks.”

Nhinh and her husband really looked

forward to the earned profits from the next herds, as they seemed finding out the way to develop the husbandry model from a small loan. While giving us the farewell, Nhin said “this capital for renting is small but really useful and practical for small-holder farmers like us. We thank the project and would love to follow other activities.”

Na Dua village

Going down a dirt pathway, further than Nhin’s family, I caught up with another stilt house of Nung ethnic group. The wooden house appeared firm and strong, situated in the mid-slope that leads to a small stream and a bed of paddy field. Ten meters from the house was located a latrine, colored in blue by the second-hand tarpaulin.



Photo 16: Hoang Thi Nguyen. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Walking towards me was a woman of age 50, along with was the friendliness shining the whole face. She gently approached and showed the happiness once knowing that we’re from the ADRA project.

Finding a comfortable spot in front of the house for standing, we started getting known about the family of this woman named Hoang Thi Nguyen. They are of four consecutive generations living under the same roof, ranging from her parents in law to the little grandchild of Nguyen. Her husband is used to acting seasonal worker, the rest of the time

he helps her cultivate in the farm. The two sons’ families of Nguyen are service workers in the town, they earn decent money to contribute for their stay and nurture the little kid. In comparison with the surrounding households, Nguyen’s family is ranked “medium” level, of the criteria for the remote area.

Falling into the same situation of the whole region, the house of Nguyen had not owned any properly designated toilet yet. Just few months ago, all the members of the family still headed to the bush or the stream to practice open defecation. “As you see, we live quite close to the others, so we feel embarrassed if they see us doing private things”, Nguyen shyly smiled while sharing.

Becoming a member of CEDLIP, the family of Nguyen actively promoted the movement of building and using the household toilets with the people in the neighborhood. “My entire family gave hands in this construction. We bought the toilet squat (around 20USD), pipe, tarpaulin and fibre cement sheets for roofing. The remaining was granted by the project, including 150 bricks

and 2 bags of cement for making the septic tank. We agreed on the temporary use of tarpaulin for covering; when we have more money to invest in, we will buy the wood to replace.”

“I feel grateful to the project because the family is really benefited by the toilet. Although the location is a little bit far from home, due to the fact that closer distance lies in the rocky bed that causes problem in digging, the toilet is still more convenient, especially for the elderly in the house. At first my father (83 years old) did not know how to use the toilet then the children in the house had to guide him. Now he prefers using it to walking further down the stream. More importantly, we feel safe and confident with a private space”, Nguyen sincerely spoke the last words from her heart.



Photo 17: Nguyen led us to her house's toilet. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Pac Rieu village



Photo 18: Hoang Thi Hoa and her son. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Hoang Thi Hoa, who was born in 1987, is the Vice-leader of the Pac Rieu Community Development Club (Thuong Ha commune, Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province). She got

married in 2012 and her couple moved out of the parents-in-law's dwelling after the wedding. They, however, nurse an auntie, who doesn't have private family, partially due to her disability.

Hoa and her husband are teachers of elementary and kindergarten level. Besides the stable income of being officials, Hoa also raises pigs and ducks to earn extra income. She owns 12 ducks and 3 pigs in the shed. She said these pigs were supported by the ADRA project: "I take part in the Community Development Fund of the club. Similar to the other households, I submitted the proposal for the loan of 3 million and family matched another 3 million dong, we bought 3 pigs. We try to take care of them well so can gain more profit in the coming festivity time."

Holding one of key positions in the club leading team, Hoa becomes the core actor and the trainer of the project. She will conduct the replication training to the villagers, after being trained by the project officers. Hoa let us know that the training topics are really useful and help improve her competences in leading, managing ... "I learned how to manage the inflow and outflow of money, how to keep the community fund transparent and accountable, how to mobilize the people to submit the proposals for developing household economic. Besides, we are updated the new agricultural and forestry techniques. In November, there was the training course on making fermented fertilizers. I already learned and did at home, preparing for the usage after Tet (a traditional New Year Festival) to cultivate watermelons", Hoa said.



Photo 19: The toilet in Hoa's house. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Of the improvement in living condition, Hoa and the family constructed a toilet following the call of community initiative. This construction work proves the indeed value for all the members in the house. Ms. Rinh – Hoa's auntie said: "I like using this toilet. There's no odor and it's clean as we flush the water after every using time. The toilet is also covered so it's wind and water-proof. Before I used to go to the stream, it didn't smell bad either because the water washed away everything, but of course we felt bad for the people living downstream. There was no other way so we kept that practice. Now we don't feel ashamed anymore."



Photo 20: Ms. Rinh – Hoa's auntie talks to us while she cooks the pig food. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Ban Rung village

The whole village actively responds to the project activities, creating exceeding results to the targets

Leaving to visit Ban Rung village in the last day, I kept in mind few impressive figures coming highlighted in our project record of Community Development Initiatives (CDI). According to the table, the ratio of local contribution (including cash for purchasing construction materials and equivalent payment of manpower) to project grant was 4.45 times. Questioning of the efficiency might be found during this visit and that triggered our eagerness to meet up various households.

The first stop brought us to see Mr. Hoang Van Luan – village header of Ban Rung (Bao Toan commune, Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province, Vietnam) for more or less 10 years. It accounted for the prestige and trust earned from surrounding people, Luan was also elected to become the Community Development Club (CDC) leader once the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project (CEDLIP) of ADRA was set up at the site.

Luan shared about CEDLIP as: “the idea of project has been never happening here. The established CDC is truly an effective tool to gather people, at least to disseminate the new knowledge and information to conduct life improvement. Since people already saw few benefits from the project to their families, they became more actively engaged in the coming activities.”

He also took the example of the Community Development Initiative to prove to us. “The community here is basically not too isolated, except the households belonging Mong ethnic minority community dwelling on tops of the mountains, and so not too impoverished. A number of families find the way to develop household economic, for instance my family opening a miscellaneous shop, which is located adjacent to the main road, to earn some more cash; and the others having members as hired workers. The living conditions, however, maintain pretty much traditional, especially in terms of sanitation and hygiene. Of 33 households in total, solely 5 already built house toilet. When the CDC provoked the idea of a joint-action, with a small assistance to ignite the spirit, dwellers were driven to construct the most urgent facility in the house, which is the toilet combined with bathroom.”

24 households registered to the CDI of Ban Rung village and each received constructions materials of 400 bricks, 6 kg of steel and 3 bags of cement in October, which were totally worth 1 million dong. This support was of small volume for each family, since they committed to bring in the construction of bathroom in combination with the toilet this time for entire family health protection. Based on Luan’s comment, “this is a leap in the community’s awareness when we finally agreed on this initiative. The families, which even are economically better than the threshold of poverty, had not moved to the improvement before. And households of the other villages only came up with the toilets as I observed. Now we have both things done over the expectation.”

Another great point was that Ban Rung club proposed to the project to support 3 households in special needs, those having persons with disabilities and being not capable of matching the fund with project to implement the initiative. After consideration, this proposal was approved and

these families received 1.5 million dong that is sufficient for a basic toilet with septic tank and squat stool. The wall would be built by utilizing found wood or used tarpaulin.

Speaking about other project activities, Luan told: "in the most recent meetings, I started the communication about 25 actions to be conducted at home for direct improvement. These are collected in a calendar size paper and very easy to remind all family members to follow after. Due to the practicality, the meeting participant responded very positively. For instance, they promptly registered for following actions with improvement in a month: no littering; building and using proper sanitation facilities; no domestic violence. The club management board will actively visit and check with the families about the improvement. Overall, I found the project activities are being developed very well in the area. I look forward to seeing more positive changes coming."



Photo 21: Luan shows his newly built toilet combined with bathroom, one of the construction works implemented following the first year project initiative. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Ban Rung village

The project launches a movement for social change

“ADRA project provoked the movement, triggered common spirit for the people here to build and use the latrine. Before some households already had the intention to do, some did not; but eventually the custom just laid a brick of hesitance. This time lots of families become determined for the change. The households in difficulties are supported by the others for contributing manpower. Of this, I found the most significant success coming from project”, spoke Thach Van Minh (43 years old), a villager of Ban Rung, Bao Toan commune (Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province, Vietnam).

Minh’s household falls into the category of middle-income (based on the national standards); however the home had not possessed any proper toilet or bathroom. Most of the time, the members still practiced open-defecation and used a temporarily covered place for bathing. Now, when they stepped into registration with other families, Minh and his family agreed on constructing a combined toilet and bathroom.

“This is a really important decision of the family, because we have to replace the old pig sheds so that the toilet and bathroom can be in the most suitable place for everyone. We used the savings for years to build new shelter for the pigs, also with the ditch containing animal waste. This is one of the noticeable contents mentioned in the project meetings. We recognize this will be better for the living of both humans and animals”, Minh said.



Photo 22: Minh stands next to the construction materials for building toilet and bathroom

Ban Rung village

Solidarity of the households are shown more clearly through project activities

They were both forest workers during the employment age, Dam Van Tho and La Thi Hieu contributed to the growing and maintaining the forest in Cao Bang of the North Eastern Vietnam. At the retirement age, not wanting free days and being bound to the repeated housework, Mr. Tho joined his capital with few brothers and friends to harvest sand in the riverbank. Mrs. Hieu took care of the small garden next to the house and a small herd of poultry to increase the protein for family's meals. Both of them were living with the first son and his family.

“My son is a hired worker in Hai Phong. It's far from home so he comes back every few months. My daughter in law is a kindergarten teacher so she earns a stable income. They always try to save to contribute the purchase of house equipment and fixing the facilities”, Mrs. Hieu said.

Being a member of Ban Rung village so family of Tho and Hieu was also mobilized to participate in the CEDLIP of ADRA. “I am on behalf of the family to attend the meetings of the club. Around June 2015, the project officers along with club management board started explaining about the community development initiative, at the same time conducting training for the people to write the proposals. Needless mentioning, everyone was happy to contribute the opinions. Finally we decided to do the toilet. Households received monetary supports from the project so were very happy and excited”, Mr. Tho shared.

Tho discussed with whole family in order to conduct the improvement together with the people, however he was the only member of the club refused to get the assistance. He said “my house is not completed and not so rich either. Family is trying to rebuild the house, as you see it's wooden and had been built for years. However the house toilet is prioritized to follow the movement of the village. I gave back the project grant to the project fund so that it can be divided a bit more to the others; my family is a little bit economically better so we will do by ourselves.”



Photo 23: Tho and Hieu are proud of the work they have done, the one that took quite a lot of their life savings but was believed to bring positive change to the family. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Their toilet and bathroom were built since November and completed after a month. Tho and Hien also contributed manpower to the families in special needs to complete their works.

Speaking about the impacts of project after months of activities, Tho shared that the meetings had been really useful, for instance learning to make the water tank, agricultural and forestry techniques

as well as about animal husbandry. “The biggest change in community is about protecting the environment, both natural and for human living. The people learned to practice better personal hygiene and improve sanitation facilities, which directly affect their own life and the others’ one.”

Ban Rung village

Baby steps towards social change

Thach Van Phia and Nong Thi Tram are dwelling together in Ban Rung. Their children are married and live in other areas. The two people of age over 45 still work on the field to supply their own food. Besides, few cattles and poultries raised are the source of cash to improve the number of home equipment.

Phia frequently attends the commucation events as well as the monthly meeting of Ban Rung Community Development Club (CDC). He then keeps his wife updated of what he newly learned. Along with other families in village, Phia and Tram are implementing the CDC of first project year.

He let us know that they both recognized the environmental issue when open defecation was practiced. Not only affecting the water flow, the air and the surrounding scenary, but also their health war impacted, since going to the garden leaves abundant insects to attack them. When it’s dark and rainy, the inconvenience even increased.

They are both excited since the toilet will soon be finished by the end of December, and next February during the traditional New Year festival when their children come back home to celebrate, they all can use the better sanitation facility.



Photo 24: Phia and Tram continued constructing the house toilet by the time ADRA officers visited. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

Na Ngam B village

The only one-person household was the first destination of our visit trip in Na Ngam B village, Thuong Ha commune (Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province). I was informed that the woman – head of the house was an elder, living alone because her husband already passed away years ago. She however still performed an active member of the ADRA project in this site - the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project (CEDLIP).

All of our visits to project beneficiary households were not notified in advance, therefore keeping local people practice their normal daily routine and feel comfortable to share about the life and experience with the project.

The woman named Nong Thi Poan, belonging Tay ethnic minority, greeted us warmly. She just learned that we were from ADRA after the introduction. Almost immediately she pointed to a new stainless steel water tank installed next to the wooden house and said “this was from the project. I feel really grateful. Thanks to that, now I don’t feel embarrassed anymore once there’re guests coming to visit the house. They can take the clean water via the tap connected with the tank to wash hands and feet. For me, it relieves the burden of carrying water, storing in small containers or old buckets, which are without proper caps. I know unclean water will cause health issue so I had to be very careful to keep it safe before.”

During the talk, Poan told us that there was a commune water tank used by eight or nine families here, including hers. They paid every month 20,000 dong (a dollar) for a person delegated by the group to hold the responsibility of checking the water source and ensuring the flow to every household. Water was connected to the house via a pipe and she was able to store only a small volume. After receiving 860,000 dong from project, added up to her savings, Poan bought a 500m³ tank. From now on, she would be more water secured, even during the dry season.

“Standing for a counted household in the village, I therefore participate in every community activity. I never miss any meeting of the project. I understand the information given by project officer and find it useful. I like making the change and I teach my children accordingly, every time when they come to visit me”, said Poan.



Photo 25: The tools Poan used to contain the water before.
Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.



Photo 26: Poan uses the water from the new tank. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Na Ngam B village



Photo 27: Lay Thi May. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

“We have three kids, following grade 2, 5 and 10 respectively. Rasing and caring a family of five is not an easy task. Also we have to pay the tuition fees and the lunches when the kids stay at school for extended curriculums”, Lay Thi May (42 years old) said.

With her husband – La Van Chai (36 years old), May work on rice and vegetable cultivation and animal husbandry to improve the family life. “Every year we use 5 bags of seeds (around 5kg) to cultivate. The harvested product is of more than dozens rice packs, which still leave us in hunger from 6-7 months. I have tried to sell more vegetable and the firewood collected from forest, but it’s such a hard life for us”, May shared.

Once May attended the club meeting of Na Ngam B, Thuong Ha commune (Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province), she was introduced about the loan from the community development fund, set up by CEDLIP. For May, this was an opportunity to bring the life up. She came back home and discussed with the husband to raise cow, because Chai was a worker for the cow trader so he more or less had certain experience in choosing a good breed. After approval, they got 3 million dong from the fund, added to the borrowings from different acquaintances; they bought a calf for raising and selling later to earn profit.

“This calf will be receiving attentive care from us. We will keep checking the market and sell them at the best price. The earned profit will be invested in the next model and partially afford our children’s tuition fees.”

May and Chai also received the monetary assistance from the CEDLIP to implement the community initiative. They finally bought a 1000 litre stainless steel tank to get more clean water for the family’s usage.

Na Ten village



Photo 28: Nong Van Cao attends the club meeting. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

The monthly club meeting at Na Ten village in December was really impressive; part of the reason was due to the persons on presence whom I witnessed.

A man of age over 50 was with physical disability sitting in the middle of the commune house, where organized the meeting. His limbs were moving in the air most of the time, but his eye sight was deemed to pays loads of attention to the teller – in that day the Na Ten club leader.

His name was later introduced Nong Van Cao, head of one extreme poor household in Na Ten village, Thuong Ha commune (Bao Lac district, Cao Bang province). When I asked to understand more about the man’s family, it came to know that his wife – named Hoang Thi Len – was with mental retardation and they two lived with the children’s families. Cao and Len were granted monthly government subsidies for their state of disabilities. This was nothing much but to contribute to the daily meals of the whole family. The children of Cao and Len were all informal workers, earning unfrequent payment from the work they could find in the neighborhood and as a result, the family fell

into hunger few months per year. The club management board suggested me to visit Cao’s house while he remained in the meeting to gain more understanding.

In a plot of residential land passed through generations from the ancestor’s time, I learned that Cao’s family of seven people gathered to care each other. Next to the house of Cao and Len living with their second son’s family was a wooden shack crafted for the first daughter and her child. She finished an unhappy marriage and moved to stay closer with the beloved family. Both shelters were equipped with really basic furniture such as beds and tables and few chairs. Apart from those, the houses did not own any sanitation facility like bathroom, or toilet. The people all followed a small track leading to the wood to relieve the fundamental physical need of humans.



Photo 29: Len carrying her grandson on the back. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

“It’s fine in the sunny weather. If in the rainy day, the track is slippery and you easily fall”, Mrs. Len – Cao’s wife – came close to whisper in my ear a fragmented Vietnamese sentence (Len was ethnic minority. Limited chance coming to her due to personal condition and general context that often held back ethnic minority women to gain more literacy).

Len with her grandchild on back – the only work she would do at home was caressing the baby – led me to an ongoing construction site and she pointed the pathway to the wood. Her daughter in law explained to me that: “My

mother was happy and excited to wait for the completion of the toilet. It will be safer and more convenient for both of my parents, and also for the other family members.”

Cao and Len was one of three households granted special support from CEDLIP, proposed by the community development club where they lived in. From the beginning when the initiative was raised, there were 26 out of 28 households registering for the action, including the Cao’s family, the other two already had the home toilets. Households received partial financial support from the project (600,000 dong/household) and

Na Ten club broke the record among 15 villages set up by CEDLIP with top contribution of local families to implement the first community initiative in 2015. The ratio of local contribution to project grant stayed at 7.4 times, bringing up the total budget of initiative to 210,840,000 dong. Having this done was not only the effort of club management board, but also the determination of all local people. Most of families tried to fulfill the criteria of having not only toilet but also hygienic bathroom this time.

Na Ten village

Quan Thi Tu and her husband – Lu Van Hao – just stepped out of “poor household” and became “near-poor” two years ago. However in 2014 when Quan Thi Tu confronted a serious health problem and lost her working power, the family faced high risk of coming back to the poor, since Tu was the bread-earner. Following the introduction of Na Ten club, we came to visit the house of Tu and Hao – a wooden house adjacent to the main road.



Photo 30: Quan Thi Tu. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

Tu was staying home alone, welcoming us with a disabled arm. We gradually listened to her sad story.

“I used to grow vegetable to sell in the market. The gained profit was sufficient for two of us and one son to pass the days without hunger. One night, I got the stroke. My husband and son saw me lying on the floor and immediately brought to the hospital. Since then I lost my working power, one arm could not move as usual and my body was in pain when the weather changed. I was so sad that I couldn’t work on the garden and sell at the market anymore”, Tu sighed.

Owing to the fact that their family was not classified as “poor household”, they did not receive any support from the government. Husband and son of Tu had to do a lot of works to pay her medicine.

In Na Ten after organizing training on proposal writing and initiative implementing of CEDLIP, all local people agreed on building the household toilets. There were 29 households registering for improving the sanitation facility with project grant up to 18 million dong. Households received assistance via construction materials. Few families with better economic conditions completed the building of combined bathroom and toilet, along with water tank. Tu belonged to one of those in most special need, with difficult situation of conducting improvement. After a month of executing initiative, Na Ten community development club proposed special supports

to three households in most difficult situation. Mrs. Tu became one of those so receiving 1.5 million dong for construction materials.



Photo 31: Quang Thi Tu stands in front of the newly constructed toilet. The family is accumulating more cash to complete the wall and the roof. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

When we came to see the work, she was shyly telling us: “At the moment we are using the tarpaulin to cover temporarily. The construction materials from project are only enough for the septic tank. My husband and son will find more wood later to make the proper fence and roof. We can utilize few second-hand fibro plates in the house.”

She said: “it was really hard before, there was only one green garden, adjacent to the mountain. There was no toilet so we defecated in the stream next to the house. I knew it was not good for the households downstream but I didn’t care much. Now am not embarrassed anymore.”

Na Ten village

“Grabbing from the meetings is bundle of useful knowledge and information, for instance the technique to make fermented bio-fertilizers, disposing garbage in the proper place, building tank to store clean water, protecting wild animals and so on. This is normally not shared in the house, but after the meetings of project, someone who represents the house is encouraged to share with other members. Then we tell each other to take action”, Mrs. Lien (57 years old), a person of Tay ethnic minority group living in Na Ten village told.



Photo 32: Mrs. Lien. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.

In a day of December 2015, Lien was on behalf of her family to present in the monthly meeting of Na Ten Community Development Club. In this meeting, the club management board, which was established from the CEDLIP, introduced about the 25 actions to improve at the household level. Representative, who was trained by the project officer, explained carefully each action to the people. Lien and other neighbors questioned and raised their points and after the meeting, each family had to register the actions to improve in the time coming, starting from the simple and easy ones.

Lien said: “In the last month, the people in this village agreed on the initiative to build household latrines. I find that really useful and I know my family can improve, so I tick into the actions of using proper toilet and bathroom, storing clean water and not eating wild animal meat.”

In the previous time, short slogans of environmental protection were implemented in Northern mountainous regions; however results haven't reached effectiveness due to incentive system is not yet available. With the methodology of CEDLIP by ADRA – Participatory Action Oriented Training – the households will select the actions of improvement, under the supervision and encouragement of the club leaders. This method ensures that awareness raising will be accompanied by behavioral change.



Photo 33: Lien discusses with other villagers about the table of 25 actions during the club meeting. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.



Photo 33.1: Lien registers the actions for household improvement with the club management board. Credit: Vu Thu Trang – Development and Marketing Officer.



Photo 34: Hoang Van Hao shows the fish pond in a late afternoon. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

Na Ngam A village

Loan to flourish household economic scheme

Despite of young age (29 years old), Hoang Van Hao already has a full family, wife and two kids following primary schools. In the same house, he is also caring his mother of old age. Working hard during a number of years has earned him fixed assets, which help his family not fall into starvation in any month. Together Hao and his wife cultivate paddy rice, plant cunninghamia and star anise

trees. Annual income from harvesting star anise valued at 30-40 million dong (approx. 1500-2000USD) remains prime financial inflow that sustains the family's wellbeing.

Not being held back by the only plant model, Hao started investing in the fish pond to increase household production and income in 2013. Initial investment in raising fish was 80 million dong, part was his life savings and the bigger rest was borrowings from relatives and acquaintances. During 2 years, the obtained profit has not yet offset the borrowed capital, and so Hao still stuck at debt payment.

Participating in the CEDLIP project of ADRA, Hao has learned more about the Community Development Fund set up by project, and the opportunities of financial access. He submitted his proposal to maintain the fish raising scheme. With the majority of approval from community, Hao received the loan of 3 million dong from CEDLIP. The loan was of small amount, but he has been using to supplement the nutritious food for the fish. By this way, the fish will grow faster, resulted in shortened duration of harvesting and getting the next school of fish; Hao will be able to earn more profit at the end.

Hao expressed his sincere appreciation to ADRA: "Thanks to the project activities, not only I have grown further in terms of my knowledge and awareness in different issues, but also I have approached the opportunities to develop the model for household income generation. I look forward that the fish will be sold at good price and we will be able to repay the borrowings at the soonest."

Na Ngam A village

Cattle Shed Removal

The custom of keeping livestock under the stilt house or so close to the human living area of ethnic minority population has been prevalent and remaining of practice for generations in the mountains of Northern Vietnam. Part of the reason counts on security for valuable assets of the family, along with other factors including the land, the labor and the use of waste.

Family of Luong Van Tien (28 years old), living in Na Ngam A of Thuong Ha commune followed this custom before the change provoked by CEDLIP. Tien sincerely bore his heart: “many generations of my family had been keeping the livestock close to humans. We didn’t smell the bad odor because we got used to.”

However since the implementation of CEDLIP in Na Ngam A, people of the village are communicated about the topics of environment and hygiene. They start being aware of the issue keeping animals close to human living area and the bad management of animal waste; all cause negative impacts such as spread of diseases and degradation of environment. Therefore when the community initiative was proposed, residents of Na Ngam A including Tien discussed to bring this custom to change.

“We notice that this will make change for the lives of our children, and we are setting sample for them to follow better practice”, Tien said.

Tien and his wife spent a week of labor work to build the new shed for the family’s buffalos. He received 18 fibre cement sheets from the project to make the roof. The rest is mostly wooden; pieces were found in the forest or purchased by the family.



Photo 35: Luong Van Tien removed the buffalo shed to the new place, located in his family's land. The shed was requested by ADRA project to have lock, in order to ensure the livestock's security. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer

Na Ngam A village

Hoang Thi Hoa (age 42) is an active member of the Women's Union of Na Ngam A village. She has been participating in a variety of social activities contributing to the community development, yet Hoa has had no chance to attend any specific training.

Starting from April of 2015, the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project (CEDLIP) executed by ADRA brought into practice training courses with the aim to build up capacity of officers and key persons at locality level. Hoa engaged in the project with a position in the management board of Na Ngam A Community Development Club (CDC) and therefore was proposed to attend the training sessions for trainers.

“Participating in training means I have to arrange and set aside the daily house work, normally spending three days for a course. The more I involve in the project, the more worthy and useful that I found the training and project respectively”, Hoa said.

She continued “I am confident now to stand in front of and talk to my people about the knowledge I have gained from project. The people question and sometimes come up with conflict, I am able to lead the community and work thoroughly with them to solve the problems.”

It is a blessing that the other members in her family, including husband and the children never complain about the work she is doing with ADRA. They, in fact, do give support to Hoa so she can continue working on community development.



Photo 36: Hoang Thi Hoa. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

Khuoi Chu village

Household water tank initiative

Household of Tan Van Ich (50 years old) and Hoang Thi Do (40 years old) has 8 people living in the house. Despite of big family, the main income source still depends on few hundreds meters of arable land. They raise some cattle and poultry, but mainly to supply the family's meals and contribute to the family events in special occasions. The whole family faces economic difficulty.

Their longtime wish was to build a water tank. Ich used to store water in a rusty steel tank, taken from an acquaintance. Sometimes because of the small capacity, the washing and bathing become a challenge for all 8 people. Moreover, due to the fact that water is directly taken from the source, the rusty container is not deep enough to desilt the water and so the used water is really dirty.

Ich is an active member of the club. They got to know about the initiative provoked by the project and raised the idea of building water tank. "Not only my house but also the others face same issue of using unclean water. I think the idea of building water tank will benefit everyone", Ich said. The initiative was approved and each family in Khuoi Chu received 130 bricks, a bag of cement and 2m³ of sand to build the house water tank.

"All the daily activities become more convenient with this tank. After working on the field, we can wash hands and feet before coming to the house. The children can have shower when they need, and my wife takes clean water to cook for the whole family. I feel indeed grateful", Ich concluded the talk.



Photo 37: Tan Van Ich and Hoang Thi Do. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.



Photo 38: Hoang Thi Do uses water from the new tank . Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

Khuoi Chu village



Photo 39: Khuoi Chu village. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

Tan Van Nguyen is the club leader of Khuoi Chu Community Development Club. Apart from this role, he also acts as the secretary of village party cell. With this responsibility, Nguyen is often invited to the training at provincial level.

Different from the information updated at provincial level, which is related more to the state policies and strategies, Nguyen gets into more practical topics concerning agriculture and environment at the project level.

He told the training content from the project is really practical and suitable to the local situation. Those obtained

knowledge and competences help him to implement the activities more effectively.

“Thanks to the training on identifying needs and understanding the procedure of operating activities and receiving people’s opinions, the activity to execute community initiative in Khuoi Chu took only a month from the idea to proposal and implementation”, Nguyen said.



Photo 40: The meeting of Khuoi Chu club. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.



Photo 41: The Registration of 25 actions for household improvement is implemented in the club meeting in December. Tan Van Nguyen and the other members of club management board lead the explanation for the local people. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

Coc Lung village

Coc Lung is a poor village of Bao Toan commune, the villagers have not accessed to the national electricity grid or hydro-power electricity. Only few households can afford the simplest installation of solar power and utilized the generated electricity from this source.

San Thi Chinh is considered one of the most enthusiastic members of Coc Lung club management board. Chinh told she had been attending all the training courses with the aim of building capacity for local officers with suitable topics.

“There are matters at locality that we didn’t recognize before, but after the training, we are able to identify the problems and know how to find the solutions. I am even happier to receive the documents after the training, so that I can learn more after the class about issues that I haven’t understood completely. The training documents are kept carefully so that I can double check the information and knowledge to be taught to the local people in replication training or club meetings”, Chinh shared.



Photo 42: San Thi Chinh. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

Coc Lung village

Hoang Van Tuong (47 years old) is the breadwinner for family of 6 people, including his mother, wife and 3 children. They are purely small farmers, working on the field and relying on the income from cultivating few industrial trees.

Tuong said his family is still in difficulty due to the fact that all children are still at junior age so they barely support the parents to work. Since September 2015, his family received a loan from the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project (CEDLIP) of

ADRA, which was worth 3 million dong to develop the livelihood. He decided to buy 2 pigs.

Besides the loan, Tuong also takes part in other project activities to perceive the advanced knowledge in animal husbandry, for example caring and preparing food for the pigs so as to make good use of herding.

Tuong hopes that he can sell these 2 pigs with good price, and he will reinvest in the next herd. The earned profit will be used to prepare the schooling of his children. At the moment, his two first daughters are following grade 8 and 9, they will move to high school level next

year and that will require Tuong an amount of money to support them when they study in boarding school.



Photo 43: Mother and youngest son of Hoang Van Tuong. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.



Photo 44: Tuong prepares the food for the pigs. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer



Photo 45: Hoang Van Tuong shows the pigs he owns. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer

Na Tong village – Thuong Ha commune



Photo 46: Phuong Thi Ban. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

In existing projects, ADRA places an emphasis on the most vulnerable people, including the elderly, women, children and people with disabilities in order to empower their status and role in the family and the society. With CEDLIP, from the beginning of project design, women are identified one of main actors driving activities and progress. Members of Women's Union are encouraged to participate actively in the establishment and operation of the Community Development Club.

It is common that half of the participants in monthly club meetings are female, including the elder women of the family. The female members of CDCs are encouraged to discuss with the families and borrow the loans from the Community Development Fund. With the ease in requirements of the loans, the women can take advantage to develop the house economic models, producing produce for market and selling while balance the responsibilities with their families.

Phuong Thi Ban is the vice-president of Women's Union in Thuong Ha commune and also one member of the club management board in Na Tong village, Thuong Ha commune. She started joining in first project activities in April 2015. Since then, Ban took part in 6 training course with different topics, which were considered easily understandable and practically applied. Ban said there were topics she already heard on the television and radio but just until the training session, she got the chance to understand more deeply and question the trainers. Among the learned topics, Ban was more interested in the knowledge of managing community fund transparently and accountably. This content has helped a lot in her current work at community development club. "I can help the other women in the village to understand more about their role in family and so they can be more active in actions. There were a number of women in this village proposed and received the loans from community development fund that was set up by the project", Ban said.

She continued sharing: "even the work in the family and in the Women's Union is abundant, I am still happy to join in all coming training organized by the project. There are many interesting topics that we feel like not wanting to stop as the breaktime comes."

Na Tong village – Thuong Ha commune



Photo 47: Hoang Thi Khin. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer

"We completed the building of new house in 2013. I, my husband and one son stay together. At that moment, the desire to construct the home toilet was not driven strong enough. Part of the reason was that people in the neighborhood also did not build it, so we thought just following the old custom was fine", Hoang Thi Khin (46 years old) living in Na Tong village of Bao Toan commune said.

Thanks to the communication event and monthly meetings organized

by CEDLIP, Khin and other households are more aware of the living environment and issue of open defecation. From the mind change, villagers of Na Tong decided to build up the house latrine initiative.

Apart from the 800,000 dong grant of project, Khin's family contributed 1.2 million dong to the construction. Since the day of having new toilet, Khin and her family do not have to go to the

garden or the rice field for defecation. “Surrounding my house are not covered by bush or other things, since we go to the empty space, we are also concerned if being caught by someone. Moreover, we sometimes go to the stream, and this is also the place for bathing and washing clothes. The contamination therefore renders unhygienic conditions. Since we changed, this created the spillover effect to the people in neighborhood. Everyone wants to have home toilet now”, Khin shared.

Na Tong village – Thuong Ha commune

Open defecation causes tremendous problems in the remote areas, especially the mountainous regions in Vietnam. Due to many factors, including traditional cultural practices and lack of access to sanitation facilities (toilets), local people still conduct the action up to now. Education is in need to be pushed thoroughly, along with concrete actions to bring up behavioral changes.

Part of CEDLIP is progressing on the right track. By working with the community to empower their awareness and the capacity to tap into action, CEDLIP encourage the local to change.

The shelter of Nong Thi Va is next to main transport route. She lives with husband and the son’s family. “Because of the location, and the population density of the area, we hardly found a place for convenient defecation. The families living faraway the road could go to the stream, or to the wood, but my family was not able to. We used to dig a hole, and cover the place temporarily for the family’s demand.”

With the support of ADRA project - Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project - in this year, Va built a proper toiler for her family. Their new toilet has walls and roof to ensure the convenience for users.

“The toilet will be so useful in the winter for my grandchild. Before we kept him in the house to avoid getting cold; now the toilet is more wind-proof and he can go by himself”



Photo 48: Nong Thi Va and the new house toilet.
Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer

Po Pan village



Photo 49: Thuong with the house water tanks. The new one is used for cooking and bathing. The old cement tank provides water for washing animal sheds. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Program M& E Officer.

Having 6 people under the same roof creates urgent demand for water in the family of San Thi Thuong, dweller of Po Pan village. Similar to the neighbors, her family has only one small cement tank, which has been used for more or less 10 years. The tank is used to store water taken from the nearby spring. Time has eroded the quality of this container, making it moss-grown and leaking.

Six months ago, Thuong took part in the community development club of the village where she is living.

She got to know that the club was established by ADRA project, named CEDLIP (Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project), with the aim of increasing voice of all local people as they are regarded main drivers of change. The club also plays a hub of sharing, where people can contribute opinions and take lead in initiatives.

Since that day, Thuong and her people have learned new things about livelihood improvement, environmental protection as well as knowledge about water, sanitation and hygiene. Moreover, they have the chance to tap into supportive mechanisms provided by the CEDLIP, including the Community Development Fund (CDF) and Community Development Initiative (CDI).

After identifying the most acute problem, the first initiative voted in Po Pan was to improve the water facilities at household level. Each family was supported 770,000 dong from the project grant given to community. At the moment when more options were available rather than the cement water tank, Thuong and her family determined on buying the stainless steel tank for its durability and mobility.

“The tank costs 1,650,000 dong so my family contributed the remained finance. It is clean and mobile. It has proper cover and tap, so we don’t mind that the water will be contaminated as before. Also during the dry season, the family will be less concerned of the water shortage. Thanks to the project that helps move us to this change”, Thuong said.

Po Pan village

Another household benefited from the water initiative of Po Pan club is family of San Van Khin and Nong Thi My. They both get over 60 in 2015, and have experienced difficult situation for years.

The couple has 2 children; one married and currently lives faraway with her husband side, the other unfortunately having psychological disorder. The second son used to burn the house before leaving without any news up to now. Khin and My have been trying to find him but mission was not successful.



Photo 50: Khin washes his hands, using water from the tank granted by CEDLIP. Credit: Vu Lan Huong – Programs M&E Officer.

They two elderly are relying on government subsidy, which provides monthly rice. Apart from that, Khin and his wife hope the raised pigs and chicken of small quantity can help supplement the daily meals and bring some exchanges.

Their shelter was rebuilt thanks to support of neighbors and relatives. Without many assets in the house, they carried water from the spring and store in few buckets for daily use. This was getting more and more challenging since their health of old age became worse by time.

As requirement of ADRA project, families must contribute to develop matching fund in component of joint-actions, so as to grow the responsibility of households for the change in their life. However, if special cases are reported, they will be considered for different treatment. Khin and My fell into the highlighted category since they were not able to fulfill the matching fund but their willingness of participating in the community initiative maintained high. After taking the case into account and receiving the community's approval, project granted Khin and My a plastic tank to drive their change. The neighbors helped them to install the tank in most convenient spot.

“Starting from November 2015, this is the first time I and my wife don't have to walk a long distance and carry water back home everyday. The new tank stores enough water for our cooking, washing and bathing, as well as preparing food for the pigs within 5 days”, Khin said.